Communicate!

FIFTEENTH EDITION

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Fifteenth Edition

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Preface

I am so happy to be sharing this revised version of *Communicate!* with you and hope you find the changes refreshing and relevant. As you will see, I have paid special attention to providing examples of communication as it occurs not only in face-to-face settings but also through technology-driven ones. I have also included examples of communication in a variety of contexts including friends and family, as well as across cultures and co-cultures. I hope you find this approach compelling and useful.

This edition marks the first time neither Rudy nor Kathie Verderber—the book's original authors—were actively involved in the writing and revision process. However, I have worked hard to remain true to the hallmarks of their work, while also incorporating examples that speak to the new realities of communicating today.

To Students

Congratulations! You are beginning to study communication, a subject that is important and useful to you in all parts of your life. When you want to establish or improve a relationship, when you need to work with others on a group project for class or work, or when you are asked to make a public presentation in person or online, your success will depend on how effectively you communicate in those settings.

The primary goal of this book is and always has been to equip you with the communication skills you need to be successful in your personal relationships and professional endeavors. Over the years, the Verderbers have worked to make sure that students, like you, have a book that is easy and enjoyable to read. Although both Rudy and Kathie are now enjoying retirement and are no longer playing a role in the revisions, the characteristics of their work remain. I have made sure that the information, theories, and skills discussed are relevant to the real relationships and communication situations you face. Today that means providing best practices for communicating effectively across multimodal channels and settings.

As always, *Communicate!* is written with five specific goals in mind:

1. **To explain important research-based communication concepts and theories** of human communication.

2. **To provide tools to practice and assess specific communication skills** in interpersonal, intercultural, group, and public speaking settings, as well as in both face-to-face and virtual environments.

3. **To describe and encourage you to adopt ethical communication strategies** when interacting with others.

4. **To teach you the nuances of communicating effectively in different cultures.**

5. **To stimulate critical and creative thinking** about the concepts and skills you learn as they apply to face-to-face interactions, as well as in technology-mediated ones.

To Instructors

Thank you for considering this new edition of *Communicate!* I believe the revisions will surprise and delight those of you who have used *Communicate!* in the past. I also believe

that those of you looking for a new textbook will find this edition of *Communicate!* to be refreshing and engaging. In the sections that follow, I detail what's new and highlight the pre-existing features that have made *Communicate!* a perennial favorite among students and faculty alike.

New to This Edition

- **Increased emphasis on the role of technology and social media.** Because technology and social media now play such a central role in our lives, I have integrated discussions of research findings and best practices into each chapter. These discussions focus on how specific communication concepts operate both similarly and differently in technological and face-to-face environments.

- **A revised chapter on listening** (Chapter 6) that integrates contemporary research on cognitive processes being published today, as well as how technology and social media are changing the way we listen and bring new challenges to listening effectively.

- **A revised chapter on presentational aids** (Chapter 13) to honor the range of visual, audio, and audiovisual aids used so often in speechmaking today.

- A new **sample informative speech outline and transcript on** Internet identity theft.

New features:

- **Student learning outcomes** introduce each chapter to guide students to focus on main points as they read.

- Chapter summaries have been replaced with a **Reflection and Assessment** section asking students to answer key questions about the chapter before moving on to the next chapter.

- **"Apply It" boxes** in the margins encourage readers to reflect on and apply a specific communication concept or skill to their lives.

Revised features:

- **"Pop Comm!"** features have been revised and renamed as **"Communicating in the World"** to better reflect the nature of this feature, which illustrates key communication concepts and theories played out in daily life.

- **Diverse Voices** essays have been streamlined in ways that target cross-cultural communication challenges as told by real people who have experienced them.

- The **Appendix on interviewing** has been updated and revised throughout.

Chapter-by-Chapter Revisions

- **Chapter 1, "Foundations of Communication,"** continues to focus on the fundamental processes of communication and is still organized so that students see the primacy of messages and the canned plans and scripts we use to encode and

decode them in different communication settings and through various channels. The chapter now also includes sections on media richness, social presence, and synchronicity as they impact communication and relationships online. The section on communication ethics has been expanded to address both the *bright side* and *dark side* of communication.

- **Chapter 2, "Perception of Self and Others,"** has been updated to reflect current research about self-concept, self-esteem, and how they influence and are influenced by communication. The chapter has also been expanded to explore more fully the role perception processes play in social media interactions.

- **Chapter 3**, **"Intercultural Communication,"** includes all of the foundational concepts we use to differentiate cultural perspectives from each other. In addition, the chapter focuses on how cultural identity affects communication and presents guidelines for demonstrating empathy and respect when communicating with people from cultures other than your own.

- **Chapter 4, "Verbal Messages," describes** the nature of language and how language and speech communities influence message interpretation. The chapter then explains how message meanings are derived from the words themselves (semantics), the conversational context (pragmatics), and social and cultural contexts (sociolinguistics). Special attention is also paid toward how communicating through technology-mediated channels influences semantic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic meanings. Finally, specific guidelines for improving skills in constructing and interpreting verbal messages are proposed throughout the chapter.

- **Chapter 5, "Nonverbal Messages,"** has been updated with current research and examples of how nonverbal messages are communicated, interpreted, and misinterpreted in online environments. The chapter also describes the role proxemics (personal space, territorial space, and acoustic space) play when communicating in face-to-face and virtual settings.

- **Chapter 6, "Listening,"** has been updated to reflect what current research tells us about listening processes and challenges, particularly in light of the tendency to multitask at the expense of listening effectiveness. The chapter proposes active listening as a way to overcome these challenges.

- **Chapter 7, "Interpersonal Relationships,"** has been updated with current research and uses the friendship of Whitney and Paige to understand the stages of coming together and apart, as well as the nature of dialectical tensions in relationship.

- **Chapter 8, "Interpersonal Communication,"** has been updated with contemporary research and examples. It focuses on the role of communication in developing and maintaining a positive communication climate and a section on interpersonal conflict management styles.

- **Chapter 9, "Communicating in Groups,"** offers updated examples of types of groups and effective communication within them. It also provides an expanded discussion of virtual groups and effective virtual group communication based on current research.

Finally, the chapter offers an extended discussion about conflict in groups and how to manage it effectively when interacting in face-to-face or virtual environments.

- **Chapter 10, "Group Leadership and Problem Solving,"** focuses specifically on the nature of effective leadership and problem solving in meetings and on work group teams, which includes a comprehensive discussion about communicating group decisions in written, oral, and virtual formats.

- **Chapter 11, "Topic Selection and Development,"** continues to focus on topic selection, research, and speech development based on ongoing audience analysis and adaptation. The chapter also includes a discussion of the pros and cons of using an annotated bibliography or research cards to document information you might use in the speech.

- **Chapter 12, "Organizing Your Speech,"** includes a sample outline on the abuses of the prescription drug Adderall among college students today, as well as an expanded discussion of the rhetorical strategies one can use to gain attention in the introduction.

- **Chapter 13, "Presentational Aids,"** illustrates the role of visual, audio, and audiovisual aids in speechmaking today. In addition to choosing, preparing, and displaying presentational aids, this edition adds a section on using presentational aids during the actual speech.

- **Chapter 14, "Language and Oral Style,"** is devoted exclusively to effective formal oral language style used in public speaking as it differs from written style and casual conversational style. The chapter also highlights what is considered appropriate and inappropriate language, as well as strategies to improve clarity and vivid descriptions.

- **Chapter 15, "Delivery,"** focuses on how to practice conversational and animated delivery using your voice and body. The chapter also illustrates how to use technology to conduct effective rehearsals and to give speeches to multiple audiences when doing speeches online.

- **Chapter 16, "Informative Speaking,"** has been updated to include current examples and reflect current research. This edition also introduces a new informative speech on Internet Identity Theft.

- **Chapter 17, "Persuasive Speaking,"** has been updated with current examples and research. It continues to explain the nature of persuasion as a form of argument developed with strategies of logos, ethos, and pathos.

- The **Appendix on interviewing** has been revised to focus on the fact that many jobs are now posted and applied to online. It includes the types of questions to include in an effective interview protocol and some guidelines to follow when conducting an information-gathering interview, media interview, or employment interview as both interviewer and as interviewee. The chapter gives considerable attention to employment seekers and how to locate job openings through formal and informal networks, as well as how to prepare application materials, conduct the interview, and follow up afterward.

Hallmark Features

- **"Communication Skill" boxes** provide a step-by-step guide for each of the communication skills presented in the text. Each of these boxes includes the definition of the skill, a brief description of its use, the steps for enacting the skill, and an example that illustrates the skill.

- **"Speech Plan Action Steps"** in Chapters 11–15 guide students through a sequential speech-planning process. The activities that accompany each of these action steps guide students through an orderly process that results in better speeches.

- **Sample student speeches** appear in the text, each accompanied by an audience adaptation plan, an outline, and an annotated transcript. A new sample speech is introduced in Chapter 16: "Internet Identify Theft: Self-Protection Steps." For some of these speeches, students can use the MindTap® Speech for *Communicate!* to view videos, see the transcript and two different kinds of outlines and sample note cards, and prepare their own critiques.

- **"Communicate on Your Feet" speech assignments** in Units I and II encourage students to begin building their public-speaking skills immediately while also addressing the needs of instructors who assign prepared speeches throughout the course. In Unit IV, these assignments correspond to the speech types discussed in Chapters 16 and 17.

- **"What Would You Do? A Question of Ethics"** are short case studies that appear near the end of chapters. These cases present ethical challenges and require students to think critically, sorting through a variety of ethical dilemmas faced by communicators. Conceptual material presented in Chapter 1 lays the groundwork for the criteria on which students may base their assessments, but each case focuses on issues raised in a specific chapter.

- MindTap® Speech for *Communicate* is a fully online, highly personalized learning experience that enhances learner engagement and improves outcomes while reducing instructor workload. By combining readings, multimedia, activities, and assessments into a singular Learning Path, MindTap guides students through their course with ease and engagement. Videos are available in the Speech Video Library so that students can better comprehend the key concepts of each chapter. Activities, powered by MindApps developed specifically for this discipline, guide students through the process of analyzing sample speeches, creating topics, building outlines, and practicing and presenting their speech. Instructors personalize the Learning Path by customizing Cengage Learning resources and adding their own content via apps that integrate into the MindTap framework seamlessly with any Learning Management System.

Teaching and Learning Resources

Communicate! is accompanied by a full suite of integrated materials that will make teaching and learning more efficient and effective. **Note to faculty:** If you want your students to have access to the online resources for this book, please be sure to order them

for your course. The content in these resources can be bundled with every new copy of the text or ordered separately. Contact your local Cengage Learning Consultant. *If you do not order them, your students will not have access to the online resources.*

Student Resources

- **The Speech Video Library available in MindTap** provides instructors an easy way to keyword search, review, evaluate, and assign exemplar student speeches into their classroom and online learning environment. There are more than 70 videos, including both famous historical speeches and realistic student classroom speeches. Student speech types include informative, persuasive, invitational, impromptu and group presentations. All speeches are accompanied by activities to help students refine and develop their speech preparation and critical thinking skills.

- The Speech Plan Action Steps can be completed with the **Outline Builder available in MindTap.** Outline Builder is a speech preparation resource that provides step-by-step support for students to select an appropriate topic, design balanced and organized main points and sub points, formulate citations that follow guidelines, and create succinct note cards. Students arrive well prepared and confident on speech day, with a complete and well-organized outline in hand. Outline Builder can also be customized based upon instructor preferences and expectations.

- **Practice and Present available in MindTap,** powered by YouSeeU, is a synchronous (live capture) and asynchronous speech video delivery, recording, and grading system. It compiles student video submissions in one, easy-to-access place that allows self-review, peer review, and instructor grades in one system. Instructors are able to provide feedback via rubrics and time-stamped comments so that students no longer have to wait until future class sessions to receive timely, meaningful feedback on their presentations. It can be also used to allow students to practice their speech outside of class ahead of time and get feedback, providing students with the tools to help reduce speech anxiety. It gives students the ability to synchronize visual aids to videos and also provides group presentation functionality.

- **CengageBrain.com Online Store** is a single destination for more than 15,000 new print textbooks, textbook rentals, eBooks, single eChapters, and print, digital, and audio study tools. CengageBrain.com provides the freedom to purchase Cengage Learning products à la carte—exactly what you need, when you need it. Visit **cengagebrain.com** for details.

- *A Guide to the Basic Course for ESL Students* can be bundled and is designed to assist the nonnative speaker. The *Guide* features FAQs, helpful URLs, and strategies for accent management and speech apprehension.

- *Service Learning in Communication Studies: A Handbook* is an invaluable resource for students in the basic course that integrates, or will soon integrate, a service-learning component. This handbook provides guidelines for connecting service-learning work with classroom concepts and advice for working effectively with agencies and organizations. It also provides model forms and reports and a directory of online resources.

Instructor Resources

- **Instructor's Resource Web site.** This Web site is an all-in one resource for class preparation, presentation, and testing for instructors. Accessible through Cengage.com/login with you faculty account, you will find an Instructor's Manual, Chapter-by-Chapter PowerPoint presentations, and Cengage Learning Testing files powered by Cognero.

- The **Instructor's Resource Manual** includes a sample syllabi, chapter-by-chapter outlines, summaries, vocabulary lists, suggested lecture and discussion topics, classroom exercises, assignments, and a comprehensive test bank with answer key and rejoinders. In addition, this manual includes the **"Spotlight on Scholars" boxes** that were in previous editions of the main text. These boxes feature the work of eight eminent communications scholars, putting a face on scholarship by telling each scholar's "story." These boxes can be used as discussion starters, as enrichment for students who are interested in communication scholarship, or in any other way instructors would like to integrate them into the course.

- **Special-topic instructor's manuals.** Written by Deanna Sellnow, University of Central Florida, these three brief manuals provide instructor resources for teaching public speaking online, with a service-learning approach, and with a problem-based learning approach that focuses on critical thinking and teamwork skills. Each manual includes course syllabi; icebreakers; information about learning cycles and learning styles; and public speaking basics such as coping with anxiety, outlining, and speaking ethically.

- **Cengage Learning Testing, powered by Cognero.** Accessible through Cengage.com/login with your faculty account, this test bank contains multiple choice, true/false, and essay questions for each chapter. Cognero is a flexible, online system that allows you to author, edit, and manage test bank content. Create multiple test versions instantly and deliver through your LMS platform from wherever you may be. Cognero is compatible with Blackboard, Angel, Moodle, and Canvas LMS platforms.

- *The Teaching Assistant's Guide to the Basic Course,* based on leading communication teacher training programs, covers general teaching and course management topics as well as specific strategies for communication instruction—for example, providing effective feedback on performance, managing sensitive class discussions, and conducting mock interviews.

- The *Media Guide for Interpersonal Communication* provides faculty with media resource listings focused on general interpersonal communication topics. Each listing provides compelling examples of how interpersonal communication concepts are illustrated in particular films, books, plays, Web sites, or journal articles. Discussion questions are provided.

- **CourseCare training and support.** Get trained, get connected, and get the support you need for the seamless integration of digital resources into your course. This unparalleled technology service and training program provides robust online resources, peer-to-peer instruction, personalized training, and a customizable program you can count on. Visit **cengage.com** to sign up for online seminars, first

days of class services, technical support, or personalized, face-to-face training. Our online and onsite trainings are frequently led by one of our Lead Teachers, faculty members who are experts in using Wadsworth Cengage Learning technology and can provide best practices and teaching tips.

- **Flex-text customization program.** With this program you can create a text as unique as your course: quickly, simply, and affordably. As part of our flex-text program, you can add your personal touch to *Communicate!* with a course-specific cover and up to 32 pages of your own content—at no additional cost. The Media and Media Literacy bonus chapter can also be added.

- **A single chapter on public speaking** is available through Cengage Custom Publishing for survey courses in which developing public speaking skills is not an emphasis. This chapter, written by the *Communicate!* authors, presents a concise overview of public speaking and the speech-making process. It is designed to substitute for Chapters 11–17 of *Communicate!* and to provide an overview, rather than a comprehensive guide to the speech-making process.

Acknowledgments

Deanna D. Sellnow

Communicate!

Foundations of Communication

I

In the words of educational philosopher, Robert M. Hutchins, former dean of the Yale Law School and former president and chancellor of the University of Chicago,

> *A world community can only exist with world communication, which means something more than extensive software facilities scattered about the globe. It means common understanding, a common tradition, common ideas and common ideals.*

The title of the book you are about to read is *Communicate!* and from it you will gain skills designed to help you achieve what Hutchins describes. Before we embark on our journey, however, we ought to begin with a common understanding of what *communication* means. We know that communication has to do with things like reading, writing, talking, and listening. What people sometimes fail to realize, however, is that communication is something we can learn to do more effectively through study and practice.

At its core, communication stems from the desire to share our thoughts, feelings, and ideas with others. We do this through the messages we send and receive every day. Messages are made up of a combination of verbal symbols (words), nonverbal cues (behaviors), and perhaps visual images. Through reflection and analysis, we interpret the messages of others—sometimes accurately and sometimes not.

New technologies provide new channels for communicating and new challenges. For example, e-mailing, texting, tweeting, blogging, Facebook messaging, Skyping, and Snapchatting are expanding our ability to stay in touch with distant others. With these opportunities, however, comes an intensified need to improve our communication competence as we tailor our messages to be appropriate for these different communication channels. So this book focuses on effective communication (1) in various settings such as interpersonal encounters, small groups, and public forums, as well as (2) using a variety of channels ranging from flat print to face-to-face to mediated and technology-driven ones.

This first unit consists of six chapters devoted to the fundamental elements of effective communication. In Chapter 1, we discuss the nature of communication and the communication process. Chapter 2 focuses on perceptions of self and perceptions of others. Chapter 3 examines how cultural norms affect communication. Chapter 4 is devoted to verbal messages and Chapter 5 to nonverbal messages. Finally, Chapter 6 examines the listening process and offers specific suggestions for improving listening skills when communicating in both face-to-face and virtual settings. By the time you finish this introductory unit, you will be ready—and we hope excited—to study how to apply these basic concepts in interpersonal, group, and public communication contexts.

Foundations of Communication

When you've finished this chapter, you will be able to:

- Describe the nature of communication.

- Define key components in the communication process.

- Explain the characteristics of communication.

- Assess messages using the principles of ethical communication.

- Develop a personal communication improvement plan.

MindTap®

Start with a quick warm-up activity.

Jennifer was running late. She stood at the kitchen counter eating a piece of toast while preparing a grocery list she would use on her way home from work. She noticed that the Weather Channel was forecasting heavy rain and wondered where she left her umbrella. She added "get umbrella" to her shopping list. Jennifer quickly texted Greta, a coworker she was driving with to work today, to ask if Greta had an extra one she could borrow.

As she was texting Greta, Jennifer's 16-year-old daughter, Hailey, bounded into the kitchen and asked, "Mom, can I get a tattoo? Kayla and Whitney are both getting them and we want to match."

"Not now, Hailey. I'm late for work. We can talk about it tonight."

"But mom. . . ."

"Yes, Hailey, yes, alright. We'll talk more tonight. . . ." Jennifer exclaimed as she headed to the door. Just then she heard her computer signal an incoming e-mail message. Jennifer thought, "I'd better just get going. I can check it on my phone on the way to pick up Greta."

As Hailey waited for the school bus, she quickly texted her friends, "Awesome! My mom said YES!"

2

Terry Vine/Getty Images

MindTap®

Read, highlight, and take notes online.

APPLY IT

Consider a time when someone started reading or sending texts on their smart phone while you were talking to them. How did that influence your opinion of them? Of their interest in you? Of the value they place on your relationship?

MindTap®

Photo 1.1 What are your career goals? How might effective communication help you achieve them?

Can you relate to Jennifer? We live in an era when multitasking has become a norm. Part of that multitasking includes communicating both with ourselves and with others. Like Jennifer, we get ready for work or school while checking voice messages and Facebook pages, answering texts and e-mails, as well as eating breakfast, monitoring the forecast, and getting dressed.

Some argue that the same technology that was supposed to simplify life has actually made it more complex. In fact, communication today extends across interpersonal, group, and public communication settings through flat print, face-to-face, and mediated technology-enhanced channels. Jennifer, for example, composed her grocery list on *a piece of paper* while learning about the weather forecast on *television* and texting Greta on her *smart phone*. Then, when Hailey tried to talk to her *face to face*, Jennifer was so distracted that her communication signals implied to Hailey that she had granted Hailey permission to get a tattoo.

Unfortunately, one of the negative consequences of having so many modes through which we can communicate is the false sense of competence it gives us about our ability to have several conversations at once. This chapter and the ones that follow focus on *why* it's important to improve our communication skills and *how* to do so. As a result, we can avoid the negative consequences of ineffective communication that can hurt our personal and professional relationships.

At its core, communication is the attempt to satisfy the innate human desire to share our thoughts, feelings, and ideas with others. We do this through the messages we send and receive every day. Messages are made up of a combination of verbal symbols (words), nonverbal cues (behaviors), and visual images.

New technologies provide new channels and new challenges for communicating. For example, e-mailing, texting, tweeting, blogging, Skyping, and Facebooking are expanding our ability to communicate with distant others around the world. With these opportunities, however, comes an intensified need to tailor our messages for the different channels we use and the different audiences those channels might address.

What this book intends to help you learn, then, is how to communicate effectively (1) in various settings such as interpersonal encounters, small groups, and public forums, as well as (2) using a variety of channels ranging from flat print to face-to-face to technology-driven ones.

Our ability to make and keep friends, to be good members of our families, to have satisfying intimate relationships, to participate in or lead groups, and to prepare and present formal speeches and presentations depends on our communication skills. Time and time again, surveys and studies conclude that employers of college graduates seek oral communication, teamwork, and interpersonal skills (College Learning for the New Global Century, 2008; Darling & Dannels, 2003; Hansen & Hansen, 2007; Hart, 2006; Young, 2003). Unfortunately, these same employers also say communication skills are the ones many new graduates lack (Hart, 2010). Thus, what you learn from this book can not only improve your personal relationships, but also increase your ability to get a job and be successful in your chosen career (Photo 1.1).

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We begin this chapter by describing the nature of communication and the communication process followed by several characteristics of communication and ethical considerations. Finally, we explain how to become a more competent communicator by developing and following your own personal communication improvement plan.

The Nature of Communication

Communication is a complex process through which we express, interpret, and coordinate messages with others. We do so to create shared meaning, to meet social goals, to manage personal identity, and to carry out our relationships. At its core, then, communication is about messages.

Messages are the verbal utterances, visual images, and nonverbal behaviors used to convey thoughts and feelings. We refer to the process of creating messages as **encoding** and the process of interpreting them as **decoding**. So when a toddler points to her bottle and cries out "Ba-ba," her message (comprised of a nonverbal gesture—pointing—and a verbal utterance—"Ba-ba") expresses her desire for her caregiver to give her the bottle of milk. How the caregiver responds, however, depends on how he or she decodes the message. The caregiver might respond by handing her the bottle or by saying, "Sorry, cutie, the bottle is empty." Either response is also a message. **Feedback** is a response message that indicates how the initial message was interpreted.

Canned Plans and Scripts

But how do we actually go about encoding (or forming) and decoding (or interpreting) messages? We begin based on our canned plans and scripts. A **canned plan** is a "mental library" of scripts each of us draws from to create messages based on what worked for us or others in the past (Berger, 1997). A **script** is an actual text of what to say and do in a specific situation. We have canned plans and scripts for a wide variety of interactions like greeting people, making small talk, giving advice, complimenting or criticizing someone, and persuading others. Each canned plan may contain many scripts tailored to different people and occasions. For example, we may have a "canned greeting plan" that contains a different script for greeting a friend, family member, co-worker, or supervisor. It may also include tailored scripts for doing so in person, over e-mail, or on social media. Patricia, for example, typically begins e-mail messages to her friends by greeting them with their first name. However, when she writes to her professors, she always begins with "Dear Professor." Doing so helps convey respect for their authority.

Suppose you spot a good friend sitting at a table across the room from you at a restaurant. How might you say hello? How might you tailor your greeting if that person is a romantic partner, work supervisor, co-worker, or classmate?

We develop canned plans and scripts from our own previous experiences and by observing what appears to work or not work for other people, even fictitious people we see on TV or in movies (Frank, Prestin, Chen, & Nabi, 2009) (Photo 1.2). When our canned plan doesn't appear to include a good script for a specific situation, we search for scripts that are *similar to* the current situation and customize an appropriate message. For example, if you have never met a celebrity, you probably don't have a greeting script for doing so in your canned plan mental library. Suppose you are waiting to board a plane and spot a famous athlete, singer, or actor also waiting to board. What would you say?

communication
the process through which we express, interpret, and coordinate messages with others

messages
the verbal utterances, visual images, and nonverbal behaviors used to convey thoughts and feelings

encoding
the process of putting our thoughts and feelings into words and nonverbal behaviors

decoding
the process of interpreting another's message

feedback
responses to messages

canned plan
a "mental library" of scripts each of us draws from to create messages based on what worked in the past

script
an actual text of what to say and do in a specific situation

APPLY IT

What do you say when you greet (a) a stranger you pass on the sidewalk, (b) a casual friend or classmate, (c) a romantic partner, or (d) a family member? In what ways are your scripts similar and different? Why?

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Photo 1.2 Sometimes we develop canned plans and scripts by observing fictional characters or people on TV. What television programs might have influenced your canned plans and scripts? Why and how?

communication context
the physical, social, historical, psychological, and cultural situations that surround a communication event

physical situation
location, environmental conditions (temperature, lighting, noise level), distance between communicators, seating arrangements, and time of day

social presence
a sense of "being there" with another person virtually

social situation
the nature of the relationship that exists between participants

historical situation
the background provided by previous communication between the participants

As you figure that out, you are likely to draw from similar scripts and customize them for the person and occasion.

The point here is that we don't usually start from scratch to form messages. Instead we recognize what type of message we want to form, search our mental canned plan library for an appropriate script, and then customize it to fit the unique parts of the current situation. All of this mental choosing typically happens in nanoseconds. We also use our canned plans and scripts to interpret messages from others. Obviously, the larger your canned plan library is, the more likely you will be to form appropriate and effective messages, as well as understand and respond appropriately to the messages of others.

Communication Context

According to noted German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, the ideal communication situation is impossible to achieve, but considering context as we communicate can move us closer to that goal (Littlejohn & Foss, 2010). The **communication context** is made up of the physical, social, historical, psychological, and cultural situations that surround a communication event.

The **physical situation** includes the location, the environmental conditions (temperature, lighting, noise level), and the physical proximity of participants to each other. The physical situation may also be virtual as we interact with others via social media on our computers, tablets, and smart phones. The physical situation can influence how we interpret the messages we send and receive. We are likely to be most successful when we are present with those with whom we are interacting, either literally, as in face-to-face situations, or virtually. The term we use for creating a sense of "being there" with another person virtually is **social presence**. One technology-enhanced communication channel that does not lend itself to conveying social presence is e-mail. As a result, e-mail messages can often be misinterpreted, cause hurt feelings, or damage relationships. Jonas, for instance, gasped when he read the e-mail from his professor that seemed to be accusing him of cheating. He began to fire off a reply but stopped and made an appointment to speak in person so as to avoid the misinterpretation that can come from the lack of social presence provided via e-mail.

The **social situation** is the nature of the relationship that already exists between the participants. The better you know someone and the better relationship you have with them, the more likely you are to accurately interpret their messages and to give them the benefit of the doubt when a message seems negative.

The **historical situation** is the background provided by previous communication between the participants. For instance, suppose Chas texts Anna to tell her he will pick up the draft of the report they had left for their manager. When Anna sees Chas at lunch later that day, she says, "Did you get it?" Another person listening to the conversation would have no idea what the "it" is to which Anna is referring. Yet Chas may well

reply, "It's on my desk." Anna and Chas understand one another because of their earlier exchange.

The **psychological situation** includes the moods and feelings each person brings to the encounter. For instance, suppose Corinne is under a great deal of stress. While studying for an exam, a friend stops by and asks her to take a break to go to the gym. Corinne, who is normally good-natured, may respond with an irritated tone of voice, which her friend may misinterpret as Corinne being mad at him.

The **cultural situation** includes the beliefs, values, orientations, underlying assumptions, and rituals that belong to a specific culture (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2009). Everyone is part of one or more cultural group (e.g., race, ethnicity, religion, age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability). When two people from different cultures interact, misunderstandings may occur because of their different cultural values, beliefs, orientations, and rituals. The *Communicating in the World* section in this chapter describes how the cultural ritual of mourning is changing in the United States today.

psychological situation
the moods and feelings each person brings to a conversation

cultural situation
the beliefs, values, orientations, underlying assumptions, and rituals that belong to a specific culture

COMMUNICATING IN THE WORLD

Mourning in the United States, 21st-Century Style

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Mourning is a universal human communication process of celebrating the life of someone while grieving his or her death. Mourning rituals and traditions vary by culture and religion and change over time. So it is not surprising that mourning in the United States in the 21st century is adapting past practices to modern life.

Today in the United States, for instance, many of the rituals traditionally associated with funerals and memorial services often take place online. Increasingly, one or more family member may prepare

a commemorative Web page that memorializes the life of the departed. For example, an article in the *Boston Globe* recounted the story of Shawn Kelley, who created a "moving tribute" to his brother Michael, a National Guardsman killed in Afghanistan. The 60-second video features a slide show of images of Michael growing up while quiet classical music plays softly and a voice-over recounts Michael's attributes and interests. Shawn reported that it made him feel good to be able to "talk" about his brother, and over a year later he was still visiting the site to watch the video and to view the messages that continue to be left by family members and friends (Plumb, 2006). The popularity of such Web sites can be summarized in the fact that Legacy.com, the most popular site for posting online memorials, boasts of more than 24 million unique visitors each month (http://www.legacy.com/ns/about/).

How did you/do you mourn when someone you care about dies? How do you share messages with others in the process?

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Communication Settings

The communication setting also affects how we form and interpret messages. **Communication settings** differ based on the number of participants and the level of formality in the interactions (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008, pp. 52–53). These settings are intrapersonal, interpersonal, small group, public, and mass.

Intrapersonal communication refers to the interactions that occur in our minds when we are talking to ourselves (Photo 1.3). We usually don't verbalize our intrapersonal communication. When you sit in class and think about what you'll do later that day or when you send yourself a reminder note as an e-mail or text message, you are communicating intrapersonally. A lot of our intrapersonal communication occurs subconsciously (Kellerman, 1992). When we drive into the driveway "without thinking," we are communicating intrapersonally on a subconscious level. The study of intrapersonal communication often focuses on its role in shaping self-perceptions and in managing communication apprehension, that is, the fear associated with communicating with others (Richmond & McCroskey, 1997). Our study of intrapersonal communication focuses on self-talk as a means to improve self-concept and self-esteem and, ultimately, communication competence in a variety of situations.

Interpersonal communication is characterized by informal interaction between two people who have an identifiable relationship with each other (Knapp & Daly, 2002). Talking to a friend between classes, visiting on the phone with your mother, and texting or chatting online with your brother are all examples of interpersonal communication. In Part II of this book, our study of interpersonal communication includes the exploration of how we develop, maintain, improve, and end interpersonal relationships.

Small-group communication typically involves three to 20 people who come together to communicate with one another (Beebe & Masterson, 2006; Hirokawa, Cathcart, Samovar, & Henman, 2003). Examples of small groups include a family, a group of friends, a group of classmates working on a project, and a workplace management team. Small-group communication can occur in face-to-face settings, as well as online through electronic mailing lists, discussion boards, virtual meetings, and blogs. In Part III, our study of small groups focuses on the characteristics of effective groups, ethical and effective communication in groups, leadership, problem-solving, conflict, and group presentations.

Public communication is delivered to audiences of more than 20 people. Examples include public speeches, presentations, and forums we may experience in person or via mediated or technology-driven channels. For example, when a president delivers the State of the Union address, some people may be in attendance on location, others watch on TV or the Internet, and still others view it later in the form of televised broadcast snippets, digital recordings, or Internet videos. The Internet is also becoming the medium of choice for posting job ads and résumés, for advertising and buying products, and for political activism. In Part IV, our study of public communication focuses on preparing, practicing, and delivering effective oral presentations in both face-to-face and virtual environments.

communication setting
the different communication environments within which people interact

intrapersonal communication
the interactions that occur in a person's mind when he or she is talking with himself or herself

interpersonal communication
informal interaction between two people who have an identifiable relationship with each other

small-group communication
three to 20 people who come together for the specific purpose of solving a problem or arriving at a decision

public communication
one participant, the speaker, delivers a message to a group of more than 20 people

Photo 1.3 We communicate intrapersonally when we talk to ourselves, reflect about people and events, and write in a journal. What are some examples of your own intrapersonal communication activities today?

AmpH/istockphoto.com

Mass communication is delivered by individuals and entities through mass media to large segments of the population at the same time. Some examples include newspaper and magazine articles and advertisements, as well as radio and television programs and advertisements. The bonus chapter on mass communication and media literacy focuses specifically on effective mass communication in both flat print and digital modalities.

The Communication Process

The **communication process** is a complex set of three different and interrelated activities intended to result in shared meaning (Burleson, 2009). These activities are message production, message interpretation, and interaction coordination. They are affected by the channels used and by interference/noise.

Message Production

Message production is what we do when we *encode* a message. We begin by forming goals based on our understanding of the situation and our values, ethics, and needs. Based on these goals, we recall an effective canned plan script and adapt it to the current situation.

Message Interpretation

Message interpretation is what we do when we *decode* a message. We read or listen to someone's words, observe their nonverbal behavior, and take note of other visuals. Then we interpret the message based on the canned plan scripts we remember that seem similar. Based on this interpretation, we prepare a feedback message.

Interaction Coordination

Interaction coordination consists of the behavioral adjustments each participant makes in an attempt to create shared meaning (Burgoon, 1998) (Photo 1.4). Shared meaning occurs when the receiver's interpretation is similar to what the speaker intended. We can usually gauge the extent to which shared meaning is achieved by the sender's response to the feedback message. For example, Sarah says to Nick, "I dropped my phone and it broke." Nick replies, "Cool, now you can get a Droid™." To which Sarah responds, "No, you don't understand, I can't afford to buy a new phone." Sarah's response to Nick's feedback message lets Nick know he misunderstood her. The extent to which we achieve shared meaning can be affected by the channels we use and by the interference/noise that compete with our messages.

Channels

Channels are both the route traveled by the message and the means of transportation. Face-to-face communication has three basic channels: verbal symbols,

APPLY **IT**

How much of your communication each day is intrapersonal versus interpersonal, versus public versus mass communication? What are some examples of each you've engaged in so far today?

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communication process
a complex set of three different and interrelated activities intended to result in shared meaning

message production
what we do when we encode a message

message interpretation
what we do when we decode a message

interaction coordination
the actions each participant takes to adjust their behavior to that of their partner

channel
the route traveled by the message and the means of transportation

Photo 1.4 In what ways have you engaged in interaction coordination with an advisor, instructor, or supervisor?

Hero Images/Getty Images

emoticons
textual images that symbolize the sender's mood, emotion, or facial expressions

acronyms
abbreviations that stand in for common phrases

media richness
how much and what kinds of information can be transmitted via a particular channel

synchronicity
the extent to which a channel allows for immediate feedback

interference/noise
any stimulus that interferes with the process of achieving sharing meaning

physical noise
any external sight or sound that distracts us from the message

psychological noise
thoughts and feelings that compete with the sender's message for our attention

APPLY IT

What symbols do you use to express emotions virtually for anger? Frustration? Laughter? Excitement? Pride? Why?

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Photo 1.5 What emoticons and acronyms do you use in text messages and why?

Thomas Weightman / Alamy

nonverbal cues, and visual images. Technologically mediated communication uses these same channels, though nonverbal cues such as movements, touch, and gestures are represented by visual symbols like **emoticons** (textual images that symbolize the sender's mood, emotion, or facial expressions) and **acronyms** (abbreviations that stand in for common phrases) (Photo 1.5). For example, in a face-to-face interaction, Barry might express his frustration about a poor grade verbally by noting why he thought the grade was unfair, visually by showing the assignment along with the grading criteria for it, and nonverbally by raising his voice and shaking his fist. In an online interaction, however, he might need to insert a frowning-face emoticon (☹) or the acronym "POed" to represent those emotions and nonverbal behaviors.

With so many technology-driven channels available for communicating today, we must now thoughtfully select the best channel for our purpose, audience, and situation. We can do so by considering media richness and synchronicity.

Media richness refers to how much and what kinds of information can be transmitted via a particular channel. Face-to-face is the richest channel because we can hear the verbal message content and observe the nonverbal cues to interpret its meaning. Sometimes, however, communicating face-to-face is either impossible or not a good use of time. The less information offered via a given channel, the leaner it is. The leaner the channel, the greater the chances are for misunderstanding. For example, texts and "tweets" are lean because they use as few characters as possible whereas videoconferencing channels such as Skype and FaceTime are richer because we can observe nonverbal cues almost as much as in a face-to-face setting.

Synchronicity is the extent to which a channel allows for immediate feedback. Synchronous channels allow communication to occur in "real time" and asynchronous channels allow for "lag time." Synchronous channels allow for immediate feedback to clarify potential misunderstandings whereas asynchronous channels provide time to careful craft and revise our messages (Condon & Cech, 2010). Generally, you should use a rich channel if your message is complicated, difficult, or controversial. It is also usually a good idea to use a synchronous channel in these cases. You might choose an asynchronous channel, however, if you could benefit from having extra time to carefully organize and word your message. On the other hand, use a lean channel when you merely want to convey simple and emotionally neutral information. Figure 1.1 illustrates the continuum of communication channels available today.

Interference/Noise

Interference, also referred to as **noise,** is any stimulus that interferes with the process of achieving shared meaning. Noise can be physical or psychological. **Physical noise** is any external sight or sound that distracts us from the message. For example, when someone enters the room, a cell phone goes off, or someone near us is texting while a speaker is talking, we might be distracted from the message. Or, when communicating online, we might be distracted when we get a Facebook or Twitter notification. **Psychological noise** refers to the thoughts and feelings we experience that compete with the sender's message for our attention. So when we daydream about what we have to do at work or feel offended when a

ASYNCHRONOUS					SYNCHRONOUS	
Bulk Letters	Posted Letters	Facebook	Interactive	Telephone	Skype	Face-to-Face
Posters	E-mail	My Space	Chat		iChat	
E-mail Spam	Text	Other social			Other video	
	Messages	media Web sites			conferencing	

LEAN   **RICH**

LOW SOCIAL PRESENCE   **HIGH SOCIAL PRESENCE**

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Figure 1.1

Continuum of communication channels

speaker uses foul language, we are being distracted by psychological noise. Recall how Jennifer in the opening vignette was distracted by both physical and psychological noise while attempting to multitask getting herself ready for work. That's why it is a good practice to close social media sites and power off smart phones while engaged in important face-to-face or online conferences, meetings, or classroom discussions.

A Model of the Communication Process

In summary, let's look at a graphic model of a message exchange between two people presented in Figure 1.2. The process begins when one person who we will call Andy is motivated to share his thoughts with another person, Taylor. Andy reviews the communication situation, including the communication context, and sorts through the scripts in his canned plan library to find one he thinks will be appropriate. Based on this script, he encodes a customized message and shares it with Taylor.

Taylor decodes the message using her understanding of the situation and matching it to scripts in her canned plan library. She might misinterpret Andy's intended meaning because she is distracted by physical or psychological interference/noise, or because her scripts don't match Andy's. Taylor encodes a feedback message using a script from her canned plan library as a guide. She then shares her feedback message and Andy decodes it. If Taylor understood what Andy was saying, he will extend the conversation. If, on the other hand, Andy believes Taylor misunderstood his meaning, he will try to clarify what he meant before extending the conversation. Finally, the communication process is not linear. In other words, both Andy and Taylor simultaneously encode and decode verbal and nonverbal messages throughout the message exchange.
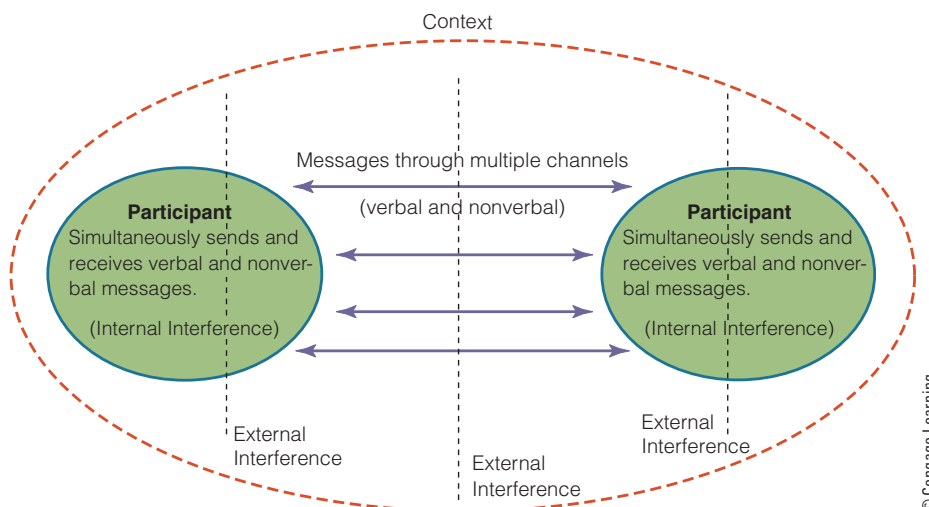
Figure 1.2

Model of communication

Context

Messages through multiple channels
(verbal and nonverbal)

Participant
Simultaneously sends and receives verbal and nonverbal messages.

(Internal Interference)

Participant
Simultaneously sends and receives verbal and nonverbal messages.

(Internal Interference)

External Interference

External Interference

External Interference

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Characteristics of Communication

Just as we learn to walk, so do we learn to communicate. Because communication is learned, we can always improve our ability to communicate. Several communication characteristics provide a foundation for practicing and improving our communication skills.

Communication Has Purpose

Whenever we communicate, we have a purpose for doing so. The purpose may be serious or trivial, and we may or may not be aware of it at the time. Here we list five basic purposes we'll be addressing throughout the book.

1. **We communicate to develop and maintain our sense of self.** Through our interactions, we learn who we are and what we are good at.

2. **We communicate to meet our social needs.** Just as we need food, water, and shelter, so too do we need contact with other people. Two people may converse happily for hours about inconsequential matters that neither one remembers later. Still, their communication functions to meet this important human need.

3. **We communicate to develop and maintain relationships.** For example, when Beth calls Leah to ask whether she'd like to join her for lunch to discuss a class project, her purpose actually may be to resolve a recent misunderstanding, because she wants to maintain a positive relationship with Leah.

4. **We communicate to exchange information.** Whether trying to decide how warmly to dress or whom to vote for in the next election, we all communicate to exchange information. We do so through observation, reading, and direct communication with others both face-to-face and virtually.

5. **We communicate to influence others.** We may communicate to try to convince friends to go to a particular restaurant or to see a certain movie, a supervisor to alter the work schedule, or an instructor to change a grade.

Communication Is Continuous

We are always sending and interpreting messages. Even silence communicates if another person infers meaning from it. Why? Because our nonverbal behavior represents reactions to our environment and to the people around us. If we are cold, we might shiver; if we are hot or nervous, we might perspire; if we are bored, happy, or confused, our nonverbal language will probably show it.

Communication Is Irreversible

Once an exchange takes place, we can never go back in time and erase the communication. We might be able to repair damage we have done, but the message has been communicated. When you participate in an online discussion or leave a post on a blog, you are leaving an electronic "footprint" that others can follow and read. E-mails, IMs, and text messages are not always completely private either. Once you push the "send" button, not only can't you take it back, but you have little control over who the receiver might forward it to or how it might be used publicly. That's why Sarah decided not to post a picture of herself with her friends at the local pub on her Facebook page.

Even though she could limit which of her "friends" could see it, she also knew that any of them could also then share it with others, as well. She didn't want a photo like this to hurt her professional image.

Communication Is Situated

Communication occurs within a specific setting that affects how the messages are produced, interpreted, and coordinated (Burleson, 2009). Do you swear when you talk? For most of us the answer to that is "it depends." While we may occasionally use curse words when we are with friends or peers, many of us wouldn't consider swearing in front of our supervisors, teachers, grandmothers, or religious leaders. Similarly, the interpretation of the statement "I love you" varies depending on the setting. During a candlelit anniversary dinner, it may be interpreted as a statement of romantic feelings. If a mother says it as she greets her daughter, it may be interpreted as motherly love. If it is made in response to a joke delivered by someone in a group of friends gathered to watch a football game, it may be interpreted as a complement for being clever.

Radius Images / Alamy

Photo 1.6 How might you signal trust and intimacy during a conversation?

Communication Is Indexical

How we communicate is also an **index** or measure of the emotional temperature of our relationship at the time. For instance, when they are getting in the car to leave for a holiday, Laura says to Darryl, "I remembered to bring the map." She is not just reporting information. Through her tone of voice and other nonverbal cues, she is also communicating something about the relationship, such as, "You can always depend on me," or "You never remember to think of these things." More specifically, communication may signal the level of trust; who has control; and the degree of intimacy in a relationship (Millar & Rogers, 1987).

index
measure of the emotional temperature of our relationship at the time

    Trust is the extent to which partners believe they can rely on, depend on, and have faith in their partners (Photo 1.6). For instance, Mark says, "I'll do the final edits and turn in the paper." Sandy replies, "Never mind, I'll do it so that it won't be late," which may signal that she doesn't trust Mark to get the group's paper in on time.

trust
the extent to which partners have faith that their partners will not intentionally do anything to harm them

    Control is the extent to which partners believe themselves to be "in charge" in the relationship. When Tom says to Sue, "I know you're concerned about the budget, but I'll see to it that we have enough money to cover everything," through his words, tone of voice, and nonverbal behavior, he is signaling that he is "in charge" of the finances. In turn, Sue may respond by either verbally responding or nonverbally showing she agrees with him or by challenging him and asserting her desire to control the budget. In other words, control is communicated with either complementary or symmetrical feedback. **Complementary feedback** signals agreement about who is in control, whereas **symmetrical feedback** signals disagreement. If Sue says, "Great, I'm glad you're looking after it," her feedback complements his message. But if Sue responds, "Wait a minute, you're

control
the degree to which one participant is perceived to be more dominant or powerful

complementary feedback
a message that signals agreement about who is in control

symmetrical feedback
a message that signals disagreement about who is in control

the one who overdrew our checking account last month," she is challenging his control with a symmetrical response. Relational control is not negotiated in a single exchange, but through many message exchanges over time. The point, however, is that control is negotiated through communication.

intimacy
the degree of emotional closeness, in a relationship

Intimacy is the degree of emotional closeness in a relationship. When Cody asks Madison what she is thinking about, and Madison begins to pour out her problems, she is revealing a high level of intimacy in the relationship. If she replies, "Oh I'm not really thinking about anything important. Did you hear the news this morning about . . . ," her subject change may signal that the relationship is not intimate enough to share her problems.

Communication Messages Vary in Conscious Thought

Recall that creating shared meaning involves encoding and decoding verbal messages, nonverbal cues, and even visual images. Our messages may (1) occur spontaneously, (2) be based on a "script," or (3) be carefully constructed.

spontaneous expressions
spoken without much conscious thought

constructed messages
formed carefully and thoughtfully when our known scripts are inadequate for the situation

Many messages are **spontaneous expressions**, spoken without much conscious thought. For example, when you burn your finger, you may blurt out, "Ouch!" When something goes right, you may break into a broad smile. Some messages are *scripted* and drawn from our canned plan libraries. Finally, some are **constructed messages** that are formed carefully and thoughtfully when our known scripts are inadequate for the situation.

Communication Is Guided by Cultural Norms

culture
a system of shared beliefs, values, symbols, and behaviors

Culture may be defined as a system of shared beliefs, values, symbols, and behaviors. How messages are formed and interpreted depends on the cultural background of the participants. We need to be mindful of our communication behavior as we interact with others whose cultural backgrounds differ from our own, so we don't unintentionally communicate in ways that are culturally inappropriate or insensitive.

According to Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel (2007) "a number of cultural components are particularly relevant to effective communication. These include (1) perception, (2) patterns of cognition, (3) verbal behaviors, (4) nonverbal behaviors, and (5) the influence of context" (p. 13). Because cultural concerns permeate all of communication, each chapter of this book points out when certain concepts and skills may be viewed differently by members of various cultural groups. The authors of the *Diverse Voices* feature found in many chapters in this text explain how they or their culture views a concept presented in the text.

Communication Ethics

ethics
a set of moral principles held by a society, group, or individual

Ethics are moral principles held by a society, group, or individual that differentiate right from wrong. In other words, ethics reflect what we believe we "ought to" and "ought not to" think and do. Every field of study—from psychology and biology to sociology and history—has a set of ethical principles designed to guide the practice of that field. Communication is no exception. Every time we communicate, we make choices with ethical implications. The general principles that guide ethical communication include:

1. **Ethical communicators are honest.** "An honest person is widely regarded as a moral person, and honesty is a central concept to ethics as the foundation for a moral life" (Terkel & Duval, 1999, p. 122). In other words, we should not intentionally try to deceive others.

2. **Ethical communicators act with integrity.** In other words, ethical communicators "practice what they preach." The person who says, "Do what I say, not what I do," lacks integrity. We often refer to such individuals as hypocrites. The person who "practices what he or she preaches" acts with integrity.

3. **Ethical communicators behave fairly.** A fair person attempts to be impartial. To be fair to someone is to gather all of the relevant facts, consider only circumstances relevant to the situation at hand, and not be swayed by prejudice. For example, if two siblings are fighting, their mother exercises fairness if she allows both children to explain "their side" before she decides what to do.

4. **Ethical communicators demonstrate respect.** Behaving respectfully means showing regard for others, including their point of view, their rights, and their feelings, even when they differ from ours.

5. **Ethical communicators are responsible.** Responsible communicators recognize the power of words. Our messages can hurt others and their reputations. So we act responsibly when we refrain from gossiping, spreading rumors, bullying, and so forth.

Bright Side and Dark Side Messages

Interpersonal communication scholars, Spitzberg and Cupach (2011) came up with metaphors to characterize the differences between ethical/appropriate and unethical/inappropriate communication. They label messages that are both ethical and appropriate as **bright side messages**. In contrast, **dark side messages** are unethical and/or inappropriate. "Hard dark side" messages are somewhat ethical and unethical because they are honest, but also potentially damaging to the relationship. "Easy dark side" messages are somewhat ethical and unethical because they are dishonest in order to maintain a good relationship. Finally, "evil dark side" messages are both disrespectful and damaging to the relationship (see Figure 1.3).

bright side messages
both ethical and appropriate

dark side messages
not ethical and/or appropriate

Let's use Liz as an example. She just spent a fortune having her hair cut and colored and asks her good friend, Pat, "Do you like my new hairstyle?" Pat, who doesn't really like the new look, could respond to Liz as follows:

Bright side response: "Liz, it doesn't matter what I think. I can see that you really like how it looks and that makes me happy." (This response is ethical and appropriate. It is both honest and respectful.)

Hard dark side response: "Wow Liz, it's a dramatic change. I liked your hair long and I'd always admired the red highlights you had. But I'm sure it will grow on me." (This response is honest but could hurt Liz's feelings and damage the relationship.)

Easy dark side response: "It looks great." (This response is dishonest but doesn't hurt Liz's feelings.)

Evil dark side response: "It doesn't matter what you do to your hair, you're still fat and ugly." (This response is unethical and inappropriate. It is hurtful and damaging to Liz's feelings and the relationship.)

As you can see, relationships may benefit from bright, hard, and easy side responses depending on the situation. But dark side responses damage people and relationships.

Figure 1.3

Understanding dark-side messages

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We often face ethical dilemmas and must sort out what is more or less right or wrong. In making these decisions, we reveal our ethical communication standards. Each chapter in this book features "A Question of Ethics" case related to material in that chapter. Consider each case and the questions we pose based on these ethical communication principles.

Communication Competence

communication competence
the impression that communicative behavior is both appropriate and effective in a given situation

Communication competence is the impression that communicative behavior is appropriate and effective in a given situation (Spitzberg, 2000, p. 375). Communication is *effective* when it achieves its goals and *appropriate* when it conforms to what is expected in a situation. Our goal is to communicate in ways that increase the likelihood that others will judge us as competent.

Communication competence is achieved through personal motivation, knowledge acquisition, and skills practice (Spitzberg, 2000, p. 377). First, we have to be *motivated*—that is, we must want to improve. Second, we must know what to do. Third, to improve, we must practice communication skills we learn.

credibility
a perception of a speaker's knowledge, trustworthiness, and warmth

social ease
communicating without appearing to be anxious or nervous

Credibility and social ease also influence whether others perceive us to be competent communicators. **Credibility** is a perception of a speaker's knowledge, trustworthiness, and warmth. Listeners are more likely to be attentive to and influenced by speakers they perceive as credible. **Social ease** means managing communication apprehension so we do not appear nervous or anxious. Communicators that appear apprehensive are not likely to be regarded as competent, despite their motivation or knowledge.

Communication Apprehension

communication apprehension
fear or anxiety associated with real or anticipated communication with others

Communication apprehension is "the fear or anxiety associated with real or anticipated communication with others" (McCroskey, 1977, p. 78). Although most people think of public speaking anxiety when they hear the term *communication apprehension* (CA), there are actually four different types of CA (Photo 1.7). People who experience *traitlike communication apprehension* feel anxious in most speaking situations. About 20 percent of all people experience traitlike CA (Richmond & McCroskey, 2000). People who experience *audience-based communication apprehension* feel anxious about speaking only with a certain person or group of people. *Situational communication apprehension* is a short-lived feeling of anxiety that occurs during a specific encounter, for example, during a job interview. Finally, *context-based communication apprehension* is anxiety only in a particular situation, for example, when speaking to a large group of people. All these forms of communication anxiety can be managed effectively in ways that help convey social ease. Throughout this book, we offer strategies for managing communication apprehension in various settings.

Photo 1.7 Does public speaking make you nervous? If so, you are like 75% of the population. Did you know that speaking effectively requires some nervousness?

Dennis MacDonald / PhotoEdit

The combination of motivation, knowledge, skills, perceived credibility, and social ease make up competent communication. The goal of this book is to help you become a competent communicator in interpersonal, group, and public speaking situations.

COMMUNICATE ON YOUR FEET

Speech Assignment

Introduce a Classmate

The Assignment

Following your instructor's directions, partner with someone in the class. Spend some time getting to know him or her and then prepare a short 2-minute speech introducing your partner to the rest of the class.

Questions to Ask

1. What is your background? (Where were you born and raised? What is the makeup of your family? What else do you want to share about your personal background?)
2. What are you majoring in and why?
3. What are some of your personal and professional goals after college?
4. What are two personal goals you have for this class and why?
5. What is something unique about you that most people probably don't know?

Speeches of Introduction

A speech of introduction is given to acquaint a group with someone they have not met. We make short "speeches" of introduction all the time. When a friend from high school comes to visit for a weekend, you may introduce her to your friends. Not only will you tell them her name, but you will probably mention other things about her that will make it easy for your friends to talk with her. Likewise, a store manager may call the sales associates together in order to introduce a new employee. The manager might mention the new team member's previous experience, interests, and expertise that will encourage the others to respect, help, and become acquainted with the new employee.

Speeches of introduction also often precede formal addresses. The goal of the introducer is to establish the credibility of the main speaker by sharing the speaker's education, background, and expertise related to the topic and to build audience interest.

Speech to Introduce a Classmate

Because your classmate will not be giving a formal address after you introduce him or her, we suggest you organize your speech as follows:

1. **The introduction:** Start with an attention catcher—a statement, story, or question tied to something about the speaker that will pique audience curiosity. Then offer a thesis and preview of main points, which can be as simple as "I'm here today to introduce [name of person] to you by sharing something about his personal background, personal and professional goals, and something unique about him."

2. **The body:** Group the information you plan to share under two to four main points. For example, your first main point might be "personal background," your second main point "personal and professional goals," and your third main point "something unique." Then offer two or three examples or stories to illustrate what you learned regarding each main point. Create a transition statement to lead from the first main point to the second main point, as well as from the second main point to the third main point. These statements should remind listeners of the main point you are concluding and introduce the upcoming main point. For example, "Now that you know a little bit about [name of person]'s personal background, let's talk about his personal and professional goals."

3. **The conclusion:** Remind listeners of the name of the classmate you introduced and the two to four main points you discussed about him or her. Then, end with a clincher—a short sentence that wraps the speech up by referring to something you said in the speech (usually in the introduction) that will encourage listeners to want to know him or her better.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

A Question of Ethics

Molly has just been accepted to Stanford Law School and calls her friend Terri to tell her the good news.

MOLLY: Hi Terri! Guess what? I just got accepted to Stanford Law!

TERRI: [*Surprised and disappointed*]: Oh, cool.

MOLLY: [*Sarcastic*]: Thanks—you sound so enthusiastic!

TERRI: Oh, I am. Listen, I have to go—I'm late for class.

MOLLY: Oh, OK. See you.

The women hang up, and Terri immediately calls her friend Monica.

TERRI: Monica, it's Terri.

MONICA: Hey, Terri. What's up?

TERRI: I just got some terrible news—Molly got into Stanford!

MONICA: So, what's wrong with that? I think it's great. Aren't you happy for her?

TERRI: No, not at all. I didn't get in, and I have better grades and a higher LSAT score.

MONICA: Maybe Molly had a better application.

TERRI: Or maybe it was what was on her application.

MONICA: What do you mean?

TERRI: You know what I mean. Molly's black.

MONICA: Yes, and . . . ?

TERRI: Don't you see? It's called affirmative action.

MONICA: Terri, give it a rest!

TERRI: Oh, please. You know it and I know it. She only got in because of her race and because she's poor. Her GPA is low and so is her LSAT score.

MONICA: Did you ever stop to think that maybe she wrote an outstanding essay? Or that they thought the time she spent volunteering in that free legal clinic in her neighborhood was good background?

TERRI: Yes, but we've both read some of her papers, and we know she can't write. Listen, Monica, if you're black, Asian, American Indian, Latino, or any other minority and poor, you've got it made. You can be as stupid as Jessica Simpson and get into any law school you want. It's just not fair at all.

MONICA   [**Angrily**]: No, you know what isn't fair? I'm sitting here listening to my so-called friend insult my intelligence and my ethnic background. How dare you tell me that the only reason I'll ever get into a good medical school is because I'm Latino. Listen, honey, I'll get into medical school just the same way that Molly got into law school—because of my brains, my accomplishments, and my ethical standards. And based on this conversation, it's clear that Molly and I are way ahead of you.

Describe how well each of these women followed the ethical standards for communication discussed in this chapter.

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Communication Improvement Plans

You can use a personal communication improvement plan to hone your skills and become a more competent communicator. As you read each chapter, select one or two skills to work on. Then write down your plan in four steps.

1. **Identify the problem:** "Even though some of the members of my class project group have not produced the work they promised, I haven't spoken up because I'm not very good at describing my feelings."

2. **State the specific goal:** "To describe my disappointment to other group members about their failure to meet deadlines." Hint: Be sure to identify a measurable outcome.

3. **Outline a specific procedure for reaching the goal:** "I will practice the steps of describing feelings. (1) I will identify the specific feeling I am experiencing. (2) I will encode the emotion I am feeling accurately. (3) I will include what has triggered the feeling. (4) I will own the feeling as mine. (5) I will then put that procedure into operation when I am talking with my group members."

4. **Devise a method for measuring progress:** "I will have made progress each time I describe my feelings to my group members about missed deadlines."

Figure 1.4 provides another example of a communication improvement plan, this one relating to a public speaking problem.

Problem: When I speak in class or in the student senate, I often find myself burying my head in my notes or looking at the ceiling or walls.

Goal: To look at people more directly when I'm giving a speech.

Procedure: I will take the time to practice oral presentations aloud in my room. (1) I will stand up just as I do in class. (2) I will pretend various objects in the room are people, and I will consciously attempt to look at those objects as I am talking. (3) When giving a speech, I will try to be aware of when I am looking at my audience and when I am not.

Test for Achieving Goal: I will have achieved this goal when I am maintaining eye contact with my audience most of the time.

Figure 1.4

Sample communication improvement plan

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Reflection and Assessment

At its core, communication is the process of creating shared meaning whether in informal conversations, group interactions, or public speeches via flat print, face-to-face, or technology-enhanced channels. To assess how well you've learned what we addressed in these pages, answer the following questions. If you have trouble answering any of them, go back and review that material. Once you can answer each question accurately, you are ready to move ahead to read the next chapter.

1. What is the nature of communication and the role of canned plans and scripts in it?

2. Describe the process of communication and how interference may impact it.

3. What are the key characteristics of communication?

4. What does it mean to be an ethical communicator as related to bright side and dark side messages?

5. What is a competent communicator and what steps can you take to improve your communication competence?

RESOURCE AND ASSESSMENT CENTER

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Now that you have read Chapter 1, go to your MindTap for *Communicate!* for quick access to the electronic resources that accompany this text.

Applying What You've Learned

Impromptu Speech Activity

Identify one of your "heroes." Your hero may or may not be famous. Identify one of the five ethical principles of communication this hero's life adheres to and why. In your two to three minute impromptu speech, provide at least two incidents that serve as evidence regarding how this person demonstrates/demonstrated the principle.

Assessment Activities

1. Visit your Facebook page. If you don't have an account, you might make one to observe while completing this course or ask a friend if you can look at theirs. Find one example of ethical communiation, and describe the principles of ethical communication that it follows.

2. Find an example of unethical communication on Facebook and describe the principles that it doesn't follow.

Skill-Building Activities

1. Identifying Elements of the Communication Process For the following interaction, identify the message, channels, contexts, interference (noise), and feedback:

Maria and Damien are meandering through the park, talking and drinking bottled water. Damien finishes his bottle, replaces the lid, and tosses the bottle into the bushes at the side of the path. Maria, who has been listening to Damien talk, comes to a stop, stares at Damien, and says, "I can't believe what you just did!" Damien blushes, averts his gaze, and mumbles, "Sorry, I'll get it—I just wasn't thinking." As the tension drains from Maria's face, she smiles and says, "Well, just see that it doesn't happen again."

1. Message
2. Channels

3. Contexts

    a. Physical

    b. Social

    c. Historical

    d. Psychological

4. Interference (noise)

5. Feedback

Complete this activity, and see the author's answers on MindTap for *Communicate!*.

2. Communicating Over the Internet Consider the advantages and disadvantages of communicating via the following Internet-based mediums: e-mail, newsgroups, Blogs, iChat, Facebook, Twitter, and Skype. Enter your thoughts into a two-column table, with advantages in the first column and disadvantages in the second. Did your analysis produce any discoveries that surprised you?

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Perception of Self and Others

When you've finished this chapter, you will be able to:

- Describe the perception process.

- Explain how self-perception is formed and maintained.

- Employ communication strategies to improve self-perceptions.

- Examine how we form perceptions of others.

- Employ strategies to improve your perceptions of others.

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Start with a quick warm-up activity.

Donna approached her friend Camille and said, "David and I are having a really tough time. I think he's going to break up with me."

"I'm sorry to hear that, Donna," replied Camille. "What's up?"

"Well, did you notice how quiet he was at the restaurant last night? And, on top of that, he hasn't responded to any of my texts today. He must be really mad at me."

"Yeah, he was quiet, but I just thought he was tired from the all-nighter he pulled finishing his history paper. And didn't he have to go to work really early today? You know he's not allowed to respond to texts at work."

"Yeah."

"So, if his quietness at dinner is the only thing you noticed, I think you may be jumping to a wrong conclusion," Camille said.

"Really? Do you think so? I just can't figure out what he's thinking. What do you think I should do?"

2

social perception
who we believe ourselves and others to be

Two different women had two different interpretations of the same man's behavior. Who's right? Is David about to break up with Donna or is he just tired? **Social perception**—who we believe ourselves and others to be—influences how we communicate. To explain how, we begin this chapter by reviewing the basics of sensory perception. Then we explore the role communication plays in forming self-perceptions. From there, we discuss how we form perceptions of others and offer communication strategies for improving them. Ultimately, what you learn in this chapter will equip you to make conscious choices to promote a positive self-concept and self-esteem, as well as foster positive interactions and relationships with others.

The Perception Process

perception
the process of selectively attending and assigning meaning to information

Perception is the process of selectively attending and assigning meaning to information (Gibson, 1966). At times, our perceptions of the world, other people, and ourselves agree with the perceptions of others. At other times, our perceptions differ significantly from those of others. For each person, however, perception becomes our reality. What one person sees, hears, and interprets is real and considered true to that person. When our perceptions differ from those with whom we interact, sharing meaning becomes more challenging. So how does perception work? Essentially, the brain selects some of the information it receives from the senses (sensory stimuli), organizes the information, and then interprets it.

Attention and Selection

Although we are constantly exposed to a barrage of sensory stimuli, we focus our attention on relatively little of it. Just think about how many TV channels you watch regularly compared to the number of channels offered. Or consider how many Web sites pop up when you do an Internet search. Can you imagine visiting all of them? Because we cannot focus on everything we see and hear all the time, we choose what stimuli to concentrate on based on our needs, interests, and expectations.

Needs We choose to pay attention to information that meets our biological and psychological needs. When we go to class, attend a workshop, or participate in a meeting, how well we pay attention usually depends on whether we believe the information is relevant. Our brains communicate intrapersonally by asking such questions as, "Will what I learn here help me in school, in the work world, and/or in my personal life?"

Interests We are likely to pay attention to information that piques our interests. Our interests are piqued when we see its relevance to us or those we care about (Sellnow, et al., 2014). For instance, when we hear or see a news story about a crisis event or natural disaster, we are more likely to pay attention when it is happening in our local community.

Expectations Finally, we are likely to see what we expect to see and miss what violates our expectations. Take a quick look at the phrases in the triangles in Figure 2.1. If you have never seen these triangles, you probably read "Paris in the springtime," "Once in a lifetime," and "Bird in the hand." Now take a closer look. Do you see the repeated words? They are easy to miss because we don't *expect* to see the word repeated.
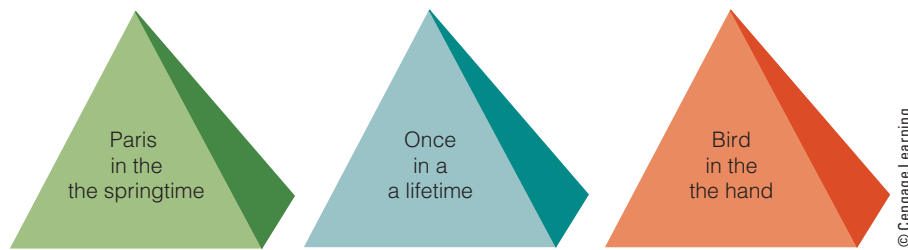
Figure 2.1

Expectations and perception

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Organization

Through the process of attention and selection we reduce the number of stimuli our brains must process. Still, the number of stimuli we attend to at any moment is substantial. So our brains organize these stimuli using the principles of simplicity and pattern.

Simplicity If the stimuli we attend to are complex, our brains simplify them into some commonly recognized form. We simplify both the nonverbal and verbal messages we receive. Based on a quick look at what someone is wearing, how she is standing, and the expression on her face, we may perceive her as a business executive, a doctor, or a soccer mom. Similarly, after Tony's boss described four major strengths and two minor areas for improvement during a performance review, Tony simplified the message by saying to his coworker, Jerry, "Well, I'd better shape up or I'm going to get fired!"

Pattern The brain also makes sense of complex stimuli by relating them to things it already recognizes. For example, when we see a crowd of people, instead of perceiving each individual, we may focus on sex and "see" men and women or on age and "see" children, teens, and adults.

Interpretation

As the brain selects and organizes information, it also assigns meaning to it (Photo 2.1). Look at these three sets of numbers. What are they?

A. 631 7348

B. 285 37 5632

C. 4632 7364 2596 2174

If you are used to seeing similar sets of numbers every day, you might interpret A as a telephone number, B as a Social Security number, and C as a credit card number. But your ability to interpret these numbers depends on your familiarity with the patterns. A French person may not recognize *631 7348* as a phone number since the pattern for phone numbers in France is: *0x xx xx xx xx.*

Throughout this chapter, we apply this basic information about perception to the study of social perceptions of self and others as they influence and are influenced by communication.

Photo 2.1 What assumptions do you make about this person based on how you organize and interpret what you see? Why?

Kayte Deioma/PhotoEdit

Dual Processing

At this point, you may be thinking, "Hey, I don't go through all of these steps. I just automatically 'understand' what's going on." If so, you are right. Most of the perceptual processing we do happens subconsciously (Baumeister, 2005). This **automatic processing** is a subconscious approach to making sense of what we encounter. In other words, we use **heuristics**, which are our short-cut *rules of thumb* for understanding how to perceive something based on past experiences with similar stimuli. Consider, for example, sitting at a red light. When it turns green, you go. You probably don't consciously think about taking your foot off the brake and applying it to the gas pedal.

But what happens when we encounter things that are out of the realm of our normal experiences or expectations? Then we must exert conscious effort to make sense of what is going on. **Conscious processing** is a slow deliberative process of examining and reflecting about the stimuli. Remember when you were first learning to drive? It took a lot of concentration to figure out what was happening on the road and how you were supposed to react. You probably thought carefully about doing things like taking your foot off the brake and applying it to the gas pedal when the light turned green.

Whether we engage in automatic or conscious processing, perception influences and is influenced by communication in a number of ways. The rest of this chapter is devoted to how we form perceptions of ourselves and others and the role communication plays in each.

Perception of Self

Self-perception is the overall view we have of ourselves, which includes both self-concept and self-esteem. **Self-concept** is the perception we have of our skills, abilities, knowledge, competencies, and personality (Weiten, Dunn, & Hammer, 2012). **Self-esteem** is the evaluation we make about our personal worthiness based on our self-concept (Hewitt, 2009; Smith & Mackie, 2007). In this section, we explain how self-concept and self-esteem are formed.

Self-Concept

How do we decide what our skills, abilities, competencies, and personality traits are? We do so based on the interpretations we make about our personal experiences and how others react and respond to us.

Our personal experiences are critical to forming our self-concept. We cannot know if we are competent at something until we've tried doing it, and we cannot discover our personality traits until we uncover them through experience. We place a great deal of emphasis on our first experiences with particular phenomena (Bee & Boyd, 2011). When we have a positive first experience, we are likely to believe we possess the competencies and personality traits associated with that experience. So if Sonya discovers at an early age that she does well on math problems and exams, she is likely to incorporate "competent mathematician" into her self-concept. If Sonya continues to excel at math throughout her life, that part of self-concept will be reinforced and maintained.

Similarly, when our first experience is negative, we are likely to conclude we do not possess that particular skill or trait. For instance, if you get anxious and draw a blank while giving a speech for the first time, you might conclude that you are a poor public speaker. Unfortunately, once we've had a negative first experience, it will likely take more several

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automatic processing
a subconscious approach to making sense of what we encounter

heuristics
short-cut rules of thumb *for understanding how to perceive something based on past experience with similar stimuli*

conscious processing
a slow deliberative process of examining and reflecting about the stimuli

self-perception
the overall view we have of ourselves, which includes both our self-concept and self-esteem

self-concept
the perception we have of our skills, abilities, knowledge, competencies, and personality

self-esteem
the evaluation we make about our personal worthiness based on our self-concept

APPLY IT

Identify a skill you believe you are good at and one you believe you are not good at (e.g., "I am a good piano player. I am a terrible cook."). Now describe some personal experiences you've had that helped reinforce these beliefs.

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positive experiences to change our negative self-concept. So even if you succeed the second time you give a speech, it will probably take several more positive public speaking experiences for you to change your original conclusion about not being a good public speaker.

Our self-concept is also shaped by how others react and respond to us in two important ways (Weiten, Dunn, & Hammer, 2012). First, we use other people's comments to validate, reinforce, or alter our perceptions of who we think we are. For example, if during a brainstorming session, one of your co-workers says, "You're really a creative thinker," you may decide this comment fits your image of who you are, thus reinforcing your self-concept as someone who can think "outside the box."

Second, the feedback we receive from others may reveal abilities and personality characteristics we had never before associated with ourselves. For example, on the way back to campus after volunteering at the local Head Start Center, Janet commented to her friend Michael, "Gee, you're a natural with kids, they just flock to you." Michael thought about Janet's comment and similar ones he had received from others and decided to explore careers in early childhood education. Today he owns his own day care center and credits Janet with helping him recognize his natural ability to connect with preschoolers.

Not all reactions and responses have the same effect on our self-concept. For instance, reactions and responses coming from someone we respect or someone we are close to tend to be more powerful (Berk, 2012). This is especially important in families. Since self-concept begins to form early in life, information we receive from our family deeply shapes our self-concept (Photo 2.2) (Bee & Boyd, 2011). Thus, one major ethical responsibility of family members is to notice and comment on traits and abilities that help develop accurate and positive self-concepts in other family members. When Jeff's dad compliments him for keeping his bedroom clean because he is "so organized" or Carla's brother tells her she did a great job on her science project because she is "really smart," they are encouraging positive self-concepts.

As we interact with others, we also form an **ideal self-concept**, which is what we would like to be (Abel, Buff, & O'Neill, 2013). For example, although Jim may know he is not naturally athletic, in his ideal self-concept he wants to be. So he plays on an intramural basketball team, works out at the gym daily, and runs in local 5k and 10k races regularly.

ideal self-concept
what we would like to be

Photo 2.2 Our family members shape our self-concept. Can you recall a time when someone in your family praised you for something you did? Is that something you still consider yourself to be good at?

Self-Esteem

Self-concept and self-esteem are two different but related components of self-perception. Whereas self-concept is our perception of our competencies and personality traits, self-esteem is the positive or negative evaluation we attach to them. So self-esteem is not just our perception of how well or poorly we do things (self-concept), but also the importance we place on what we do well or poorly (Argyle, 2008). For instance, Mitchell believes he is an excellent piano player, a faithful friend, and good with kids. But if he doesn't value these competencies

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and traits, then he will have low self-esteem. It takes both the perception of having a competency or trait and a belief that it is valuable to produce high self-esteem.

As is the case with self-concept, self-esteem depends not only on what each individual views as worthwhile but also on the ideas, morals, and values of the family and cultural group(s) to which the individual belongs. So if Mitchell comes from a family where athletic success is valued but artistic talents are not, if he hangs out with friends who don't appreciate his piano playing, and if he lives in a society where rock guitarists (not piano players) are the superstars, then his piano-playing ability may not raise his self-esteem.

We've already noted that families are critically important to developing one's self-concept, but they are even more central to developing positive self-esteem. For example, when Jeff's dad pointed out that Jeff's room is always tidy, he also said he was proud of Jeff, which raised Jeff's self-esteem about being organized. And when Carla's brother said she did a great job on her science project, he reinforced the value their family places on being smart, which raised her self-esteem about that attribute of her self-concept. Unfortunately, in some families, negative messages repeatedly sent can create an inaccurate self-concept and damage self-esteem. Communicating blame, name-calling, and constantly pointing out shortcomings are particularly damaging to self-esteem and some people never fully overcome the damage done to them by members of their families.

Our self-esteem can affect the types of relationships we form and with whom. Individuals with high self-esteem tend to form relationships with others who reinforce their positive self-perception, and similarly, individuals with low self-esteem tend to form relationships with those who reinforce their negative self-perception (Fiore, 2011). This phenomenon plays out in unfortunate ways when a person (very often a woman) perpetually goes from one abusive relationship to another (Engel, 2005).

Bullying also damages self-esteem. Children who are just forming their self-concepts and self-esteem, and adolescents whose self-concepts and self-esteem are in transition are particularly sensitive to bullying messages. Unfortunately, **cyberbullying**—the use of technology and particularly social media to harass others in a deliberate, repeated, and hostile manner—is becoming increasingly common especially among teenagers (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/what-is-it/). Cyberbullying is extremely devastating to self-esteem. The effects of bullying can have long-lasting effects on self-esteem. In fact, many years after bullying incidents that occurred during childhood, people may still have inaccurate self-perceptions (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

Cultural Norms and Self-Perceptions

Cultural norms play a critical role in shaping both self-concept and self-esteem (Becker, et al., 2014). Two important ways they do so are in terms of independence/interdependence and masculinity/femininity.

In some cultures, such as the dominant American culture in the United States, people form and value independent self-perceptions. In other cultures, like the collectivist cultures of Japan and China, people form and value interdependent self-perceptions (Becker et al., 2014). **Independent self-perceptions** are based on the belief that traits and abilities are internal to the person and are universally applicable to all situations. The goal for someone with an independent self-perception is to demonstrate their abilities, competencies, characteristics, and personalities during interactions with others.

cyberbullying
the use of technology and social media to harass others in a deliberate, repeated, and hostile manner

APPLY IT

Have you or a friend or family member experienced bullying or cyberbullying? If so, how did it affect your (or their) self-esteem?

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independent self-perceptions
based on the belief that traits and abilities are internal to the person and are universally applicable to all situations

For example, if you have an independent self-concept and believe that one of your competencies is your ability to persuade others, you gain self-esteem by demonstrating your skill, convincing others, and having others praise you for it.

Interdependent self-perceptions are based on the belief that traits and abilities are specific to a particular context or relationship. The goal of people with interdependent self-perceptions is to maintain or enhance the relationship by demonstrating the appropriate abilities and personality characteristics for the situation. People with interdependent self-perceptions don't think, "I'm really persuasive," but rather, "When I am with my friends I am able to convince them to do what is good for all of us. When I am with my father I do what he believes is best for the good of our family." High self-esteem comes from knowing when to be persuasive and when to be compliant.

Cultural norms also play a role in shaping self-perception around masculinity and femininity. In the dominant culture of the United States, for instance, many people continue to expect boys to behave in "masculine" ways and girls to behave in "feminine" ways (Wood, 2007). In the past, boys in the United States were taught to base their self-esteem on their achievements, status, and income, and girls learned that their culture valued their appearance and their relationship skills. So boys and girls developed high or low self-esteem based on how well they met these criteria (Wood, 2007).

Today these cultural norms about "appropriate" characteristics and behaviors for males and females are becoming less rigid, but they do still exist and are promoted incessantly in popular culture and entertainment media. Consider just about any television sitcom. Most of them continue to portray women as the "natural" caregivers for the family, and when men attempt to perform a caregiver behavior, they often make a mess of the situation (Photo 2.3). Think about your family experiences growing up. How do they compare? Similarly, in terms of appearance, you only need to flip through the pages of any popular magazine to see the narrowly defined perceptions of what is valued as "ideal" for women and men.

Some people are intimately involved in more than one cultural group. If one of the cultures encourages interdependent and/or gendered self-perceptions and the other encourages independent and/or gender neutral self-perceptions, these people may develop both types of self-perception and actually switch between them based on the cultural group they are interacting within at a given time. They are more likely to do this well when they see themselves as part of and appreciate the strengths of both cultures (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005).

Accuracy and Distortion of Self-Perceptions

The accuracy of our self-concept and self-esteem depends on the accuracy of our perceptions of our own experiences and observations, as well as how we interpret others' reactions and responses to us. All of us experience successes and failures, and all of us hear praise and criticism. Since our perceptions are more likely than our true abilities to influence our behavior, accurate self-perception is critical to competent communication. Self-perception may suffer from **incongruence** when there is a

interdependent self-perceptions
based on the belief that traits and abilities are specific to a particular context or relationship

incongruence
a gap between self-perception and reality

Photo 2.3 Can you think of television programs that depict men, rather than women, as competent caregivers for a family?

AP Images/Mario Perez